

April 23, 2007

**Statement of Congressman Pete Stark
Expressing Support for a
National Foster Parent's Day**

Madam Speaker, I rise today in strong support of establishing a National Foster Parents Day. Individuals and families that open their homes and their hearts to vulnerable children are truly deserving of our recognition.

Of the over 500,000 foster children in the United States, 380,000 live with foster parents. Without the compassion of thousands of foster parents, our foster care system would fall apart. Foster parents are the glue that holds the child welfare system together.

Every day, abused and neglected children enter the child welfare system and become the responsibility of our society. As the collective caretakers of vulnerable children, we have a moral responsibility to ensure that foster children receive the same love and opportunities that we want our own children to receive. Foster parents are the individuals that take on the immense responsibility of providing abused and neglected children with loving homes, often with very little government support.

Too often our society and this body ignore the plight of foster children. We do so at our own peril, because foster children who are not provided with the supports they need to mature and grow do not transition into self-sufficient adults. Society bears responsibility for this failure and we also bear the costs of incarceration, homeless services, and medical care of former foster children who do not become independent. A National Foster Parent's Day will shed much needed light on the struggles of our foster children as well as the sacrifices made by the families that welcome those children into their homes and move them toward brighter futures. It will also provide a forum to discuss the improvements that must be made to our foster care system. Finally, we will encourage more families to become foster parents by recognizing the vital role that foster parent's play in lives of children.

The thousands of foster parents around the country are the heroes of our child welfare system. We should provide them with every possible support, including the special recognition of a National Foster Parent's Day.